

Prince Bolakale Koton

History
of the

EKO DYNASTY

Foreword by: Professor Babatunde Fafunwa

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COVER ILLUSTRATION RATIONALE

The illustrator aims to convey the cultural image of Eko (Lagos).

The illustration features a procession of Eyo masquerades, led by a Chieftain, from a traditional rustic community (which in present day is replaced by modern high-rise and storey buildings).

The Chieftain is adorned in traditional attire of royalty complete with the beaded cap, coral neck and beads as well as a fully beaded staff of authority.

Eko(Lagos), being a coastal city, the water in the bottom half of the picture depicts the bonds of the local people to marine life and reflects how the waterways is used for transportation of people and goods, for fishing and recreation.

The Eko dynasty is not complete without the mention of the influence and authority the culture has on the people, old and young.

The beaded staff held in the Chieftain's hand, dropping down into the water accurately represents this.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memories of all deceased members of my paternal and maternal families. In particular, to my parents, grandparents, uncles and aunties.

I dedicate it as well to my biological sisters – Falilat and Wosilat. May the Almighty God in His Goodness find all of them worthy and grant them the reward of paradise.

A further dedication to my granddaughter, Teniola; a flowering bud, who like her mother, Oluwaşola, is so lively, so full of love and so promising. Surely, the pride of an affectionate grandfather, the glory and joy of a tender mother.

Praise be to The Almighty God, The Lord of all creation and the King of the Day of Judgement, for this precious gift to me.

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Gratitude as well to my childhood friends from our primary school days at St. Patrick’s Catholic School, Idumagbo, Lagos; Chief Lai Olumegbon, Dr. Yinka Gbajumṣ, Late Chief Judge Ligali Ayṣrinde and also to Mr. J.O. Dipṣolu from my secondary school days at Eko Boys High School, Lagos.

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I equally appreciate my immediate family; my wife, Adetola, my daughter Oluwasola, and my granddaughter, Oluwateniola for their support over the years as I travelled for research and compiled the manuscript. Thank you Oluwasola, for your encouragement and support and for sharing deeply with me in the excitement of writing this book.

The Most Glory and Honor to Almighty God by whose Grace and Mercy I was able to complete this book.

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FOREWORD

Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa

Former Minister for Education, Nigeria.

***T**his book, *History of the Eko Dynasty*, is unique when compared to the various earlier versions produced by other writers of Lagos history. Prince Bọla Kọtun goes beyond a mere narration of events, penetrating deeper into the “hows and wherefores” of the circumstances that surrounded historical happenings. Of all the histories of Lagos I have read, none is as fascinating as his rendition. Perhaps it could not be otherwise, as the author himself is a part of that dynasty.*

This second edition is an expansion of the original and includes an updating of chapters one to nine based on new information which Kọtun found necessary and desirable. He also consulted many elders of Eko, thus substantially enriching this second edition.

The book opens with Eko’s connection with Oduduwa, the founder of the Yoruba dynasty, and early links between Eko and Benin. It then traces the history of Ọbaship in Lagos from King Aşipa (the early 17th century) to the present Ọba of Lagos, HRM Ọba Rilwan Akiolu I (2003 to date).

Chapter 5 deals with the Ọba institution in Lagos, the crowning and Iwuye of the Ọba, an invaluable account which is missing in most other historical materials in Lagos. The author observes that while the selection and appointment of an Ọba rests on a rotational basis among the recognized Ruling Houses, there is no established Ọbaship Declaration act in existence at present to guide the rotation. The key players in the selection of an Ọba are the Eletu Odibo, who belong to the Akarigbere Chieftaincy group (kingmakers) and the Aṣogbṛn who belong to the Abagbṛn class (war chiefs). In the selection of an Ọba, it is the Aṣogbṛn who secretly informs the Eletu Odibo of the Demise of the ruling Ọba by declaring that “Ọba ti wọ aja”, meaning, “the king has joined his ancestors”. The Eletu Odibo would then immediately lock up the palace and take control of the property. The author goes on to discuss the process of selection, installation and the observance of the third day (Ita), the seventh day (Ije) and the fourteenth day (Ẹrinla).

Chapter 7 deals with the four chieftaincy classes in Lagos: (1) the Akarigbere class (kingmakers), (2) the Idejọ class (land owners); nine of the fifteen Idejọ chiefs have been elevated to Ọbaship status, (3) the Ọgalade class (priests and physicians) and (4) the Abagbṛn class (war chiefs) with the Aṣogbṛn as Chief of Staff to the Ọba.

Chapter 8 discusses the kingmakers of Lagos. For over four centuries the succession of rulership in Lagos was a mixed system, viz: from father to son, brother to brother, and uncle to nephew. In this section, the author throws light on how Ẹokun was installed as a special Royal Chief-the first Ogboni Iduntafa of Lagos, second in rank to the Ọba of Lagos with special privileges. This fascinating account must be of special interest to many Isalẹ-Eko indigenes. It is in this chapter that Prince Bọla Kọtun himself affirms his indirect relationship to the royal stool of Lagos. It is interesting to note that the six key kingmakers are the heads of the four classes of chiefs, viz, the Eletu Odibo for the Akarigbere

class, the Olumẹgbon, head of the Idejọ class, the Ọbanikoro, head of the Ọgalade class and the Aṣọgbon, head of the Abagbon class and the most senior chief from the four groups and one other chief.


According to Prince Bọla Kọtun, himself being an indigene, known as “Ọmọ-Eko Pataki”, there are certain things peculiar to Lagos:

1. Lagos served as the capital of Nigeria for over 100 years.
2. Most of our early politicians cut their political teeth in Lagos e.g. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Ọbafemi Awolọwọ.
3. The Adamuoriṣa (Ẹyọ) play is peculiar to Lagos and the history of Lagos would be incomplete without discussing this most important Lagos festival, known not only in Nigeria but also outside of Africa. The play is staged to commemorate the death of an important personality, such as the Ọba of Lagos, a Chief or a prominent Lagosian. The Ẹyọ masquerades, attired in flowing white robes that sweep the ground and wide brimmed hats, carry long sticks called “ọpambata”. Members of the various chieftaincy houses in Lagos organise their own Ẹyọ and decorate their hats in their own peculiar style so that one group of Ẹyọ can be distinguished from another. They parade through the major streets of Lagos, paying homage to the Ọba, chiefs and other prominent Lagosians as they move around from sunrise to sunset.
4. In Lagos, you can find churches and mosques that have stood opposite each other since 1700 A.D. without religious conflict. It is more common in Lagos than in any other part of Nigeria to find Muslims and Christians living in the same compound and celebrating each others’ festivals Christmas, Lesser Beiram,

Easter, Greater Beiram, etc. Here also, traditional worshippers are normally treated with respect.

5. Above all, Lagos is the most cosmopolitan, accommodating and lively city in Africa, an African city in every way. It gave birth to Nigeria and can rightly be called: The Mother of all the states in Nigeria.

Both Lagos indigenes and non-indigenes will find this book valuable and educative. I warmly recommend it to students and teachers of Lagos State and indeed to all students and adults of Lagos State and beyond.


Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa
Lagos (CON NNDM)
20/3/08

P R E F A C E

My motives for writing this book are five-fold:

- a. To fill in the gaps in the historical records of Eko (Lagos).*
- b. To correct certain erroneous misconceptions and negative images created about the Eko Dynasty, contestants to the throne in the early history of Lagos and to record some historical events of national significance that took place during the reign of a particular array of Qbas (Kings).*
- c. To enlighten the generality of Lagosians about the origin of the Ogboni Iduntafa Chieftaincy.*
- d. To describe in some detail certain aspects of the culture and traditions which are peculiar only to the original inhabitants of Eko; and*
- e. To trace my lineage in the Royal House of Akinla at Erin-Jeşa.*

The subject of the Divine Rights of Kings and the History of Eko has always been of special interest to me because of my background as an “Qmọ Isalẹ-Eko” and my lineage with some Royal and Chieftaincy houses in Lagos. I am obliged, therefore, to make my own little contributions to the Dynasty of Eko. For Eko is indeed my home, my village, my native land, the land of my ancestors and it is its heritage that my generation shall pass on to our children.

On my mother's side, I belong to three compounds in the Èpètèdò District of Lagos Island. Namely: Abu, Oguntusi, and Mògaji Ọlọkọ. My maternal grandfather belonged to two indigenous mosques at Èpètèdò, viz Mògaji Ọlọkọ and Abu. In fact, he was the first Imam of the Quranic Mosque, Abu Court, and later he was turbanned as the Chief Imam of all the Quranic Mosques (Quranic Central Mosque) in Lagos.

By paternal connection, I belong to the only indigenous mosque accessible to the entirety of Lagosians - the Lagos Central Mosque. My father, Baba (Chief) Sanni Kòtun was the Baba Adinni of Lagos in his lifetime. Today, I am the Irawọ Adinni of Lagos, the Bada of Surulere, the Aarẹ Muslumi of Èpètèdò, the Èkẹrin of Oko-Awo, as well, by the grace of Allah, Head of both the Kòtun family and my maternal family. My father was also an executive member of the Ilu Committee and the second Vice President of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (Demo) under the able leadership of the late Herbert Macaulay. His immediate junior brother, Chief Karimu Kòtun, was installed as the Ajirọba of Lagos on December 26, 1946.

In all modesty, I belong to a group of ancient, notable and distinguished Lagos families - The Kòtun of Ita-Agarawu, the Onilẹgbalẹ (Şokun/ Akilagun), the Tokosi and Aşafa Tijani of Isalẹ-Eko, the Onibudo of Oko-Awo, the Alokolaro of Èpètèdò and the Kòtun Pratt of Porto-Novo to name but a few.

Through my paternal and maternal families, I also belong to four Royal Houses to wit: the Ado-Şokun Royal House/ Onilẹgbalẹ Chieftaincy House of Lagos, the Royal House of Akinla in Erin-Jeşa, the Royal House of Alua in Erin-Oke, (both in the present Ọşun State) and the Akinşemọyin Royal House. My maternal grandmother was a blood relation (royal cousin) of Chief Imam Aşafa Tijani, the late Olori Ọmọ Ọba of Lagos. In fact, Chief Imam Aşafa Tijani was the head of my

maternal family during his lifetime. No wonder then that the institution of Ọba and the history of Eko are of special interest to me.

Interestingly too, concepts such as the “Divine Rights of kings” were just as deeply entrenched in the pre-colonial Yoruba society as they were in King James’ England. The Ọba, or Kabiyesi, was known as “Igba Keji Oriṣa” (second in command to The Almighty). Same, with the children of Oduduwa, the Progenitor of the Yoruba. That name actually portrayed the powers of the ruler and the high esteem in which he was held. He was elevated beyond the realms of humanity. He was seen as God’s representative on earth and functioned as both a political and spiritual head of the people. He was revered. Rather than serve, he was served; holding the power of life and death in his hands “Iku baba yeye”. Criticism of his pronouncements and policies was not considered the right of the citizen but rather an affront. The concept of the free citizen was unknown. All were his subjects. The class structure was so rigidly defined that nobility was achieved only as an exceptional feat. Succession to the throne was confined to the few ruling houses and rulership, once attained, was held till death. It was considered an abomination to resign except when princes and deviant chiefs were sent into exile. And neither could a man, after being crowned as King, return to the community as an ordinary citizen. Such a demotion was unimaginable. Today, and thanks to the wind of democracy blowing over Africa, that situation has changed. In the pre-colonial dynasty, when a King died, his servants had to be buried with him to serve him in the great beyond!

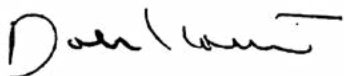
In the process of articulating my views in this book, I may have inadvertently stepped on some toes. This is natural and perhaps inevitable. However, all such persons who might feel offended are assured that no malice or malignity was ever intended.

I have taken advantage of this second edition, however, to make alterations in the structure and flavour of the first edition and I have updated Chapters 1-9 substantially based on new and recent available information which made my further research into the historical background of Eko desirable. I have made only those revisions, additions and excisions which I thought necessary in order to make the book more appealing and expansive. Footnotes which may prove helpful have also been added.

On the thorny issue of the origin of Eyo Festivals. I have added a new chapter which hopefully will once and for all put to rest the controversy surrounding the subject. Some chants and songs (Aro) of Eyo which tend to invoke the spirit of the Eyo's origin, have been added in the appendix. *Other new chapters added are: "Array of the First Class Obas of Lagos", "The Kingmakers of Lagos", "Titled Chiefs of Lagos and comments on the Oduduwa dynasty in Chapter 1 - "The Oduduwa Connection. The old chapter on "The Erin Royal Connection" has also been deleted in order to give it a complete Lagos feel.*

Praise be to The Almighty Allah for giving me the inspiration and strength needed to resume work on this book whose completion was due entirely to His Grace.

I hereby invite you all to partake with me in this compelling historical discourse, which marks for me a memorable fulfillment and which it is hoped will be available to posterity for all time.



Prince Bola Koton

Of the Ado-Sokun Royal House/Onilegbale Chieftaincy House of Lagos

Isale-Eko Lagos.

26th April 2008

CHAPTER ONE

The Oduduwa Connection

The Oduduwa Connection

No authoritative history of Eko (Lagos) can be written without cognizance being taken of the irrefutable facts which clearly show that the root of the Royalty of Eko can be traced to the Royalty of Ile-Ife¹.

Quite aside from the fact that the people of Lagos speak Yoruba, (inclusive of the vast majority in the Southwestern part of Nigeria). History has clearly shown that the “Ọmọ-Eko” (indigenes of Lagos) are descendants of **ODUDUWA** the mythological father and acknowledged progenitor of the Yoruba race - who settled at Ile-Ife (the cradle of Yoruba history and civilization). Oduduwa was the son of Orunmila. The goddess of the sea, Olokun, was said to be his first wife. All the Ọbas in Yoruba land claim a common ancestry in Oduduwa. This common fatherhood is a binding force and a source of unity.

The Yoruba people of Nigeria are found in the Western part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (now known as the South-West Geo Political Zone). In the area bordered by the River Niger to the north and Edo and Delta States to the east, the Atlantic Ocean to the south and the Republic of Benin to the west. The Yoruba are the main ethnic group of Kwara State and also constitute a substantial part of Kogi State. The Yoruba are also to be found in Delta and Edo States. Today, a Yoruba

Diaspora traverses the African continent, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, as well as parts of North and South America.

There is no culture in Black Africa that has influenced the world as much as that of the Yoruba. The Yoruba can, in some respects, be compared to the Greeks and Romans spoken of in Hellenistic and classical history. And just because their powerful culture induced a 'cultural osmosis' in other cultures, they are sometimes accused of cultural imperialism within Nigeria and Africa at large.

On the authority of Prof. A. Babs Fafunwa, (a prominent Nigerian educationist) with regards to education, the Yoruba remain outstanding and unparalleled in their achievements. Yoruba civilization had its own educational format which dovetailed easily with that of the British - their former colonial masters. In Nigeria and Africa today, there is no single ethnic group with more educational institutions and formally educated people than the Yoruba. The outstanding performances of Yoruba academics of renown at the world's great Universities of New York, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Paris, Moscow, etc. testify to the fact that, in intellectual capacities, the Yoruba are not in any way inferior to other ethnic groups on the surface of the globe.

The Yoruba are also endowed with great administrative skills. The administrative structure which the British colonialists met on ground was so 'democratic' that the British were compelled to use it. It is one of the models that eventually gave rise to the "Indirect Rule System". Though based on monarchical absolutism, there were inherent checks and balances.

Allan Burns, who prepared the 1951 Nigerian constitution, said "... I am most anxious to see the native administration take their full share in the government of this country, because I believe that indirect rule

by government, through the native administration, is the best training ground for the self-rule which we are aiming at.”²

As a matter of fact, the “Encyclopedia Britannica” referred to the Yoruba’ as the “most urbanised Africans of pre-colonial times”. This explains the detailed “civilised habits” that the pre-colonial European observed in Yoruba land and which elicited from them, her designation as a “native State”. That was around 1600 A.D.

History cannot record all the achievements of the Yoruba Royal fathers who kept their people intact; in spite of the hundred-year war of 1786 to 1886, the incursion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the repression of civil authority (based on the indirect rule system) by the colonial administration between 1886-1960.

Origin of the Yoruba

The origin of the Yoruba ethnic group is lost in antiquity, but the most popular and widely accepted legend on the origin of the Yoruba people is centered on Ile-Ife as the first place of creation and recognises Oduduwa as the progenitor of the Yoruba.

Little do most people know that Ile-Ife is more than the cradle of the Yoruba people. A version of the fascinating legend states the following: at the dawn of time, when the world was void and in chaos, Olodumare (The Supreme Being) sent Oduduwa to the world. He came with a handful of sand, a cockerel and a pantheon of gods and goddesses as a part of his entourage. The place he landed at was Ile-Ife ; where he met water covering the face of the earth. He put the soil into the water and the giant cockerel distributed it abroad, and in doing so, established the continents, namely: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Antarctica, North America and South America!

There is a second version which states that there was an existing civilisation at Ile-Ife prior to the arrival of Oduduwa and his group. This group came from the Middle East during the reign of Lamurudu (Nimrud) and had endured persecution born of religious causes. Oduduwa defeated the pre-existing Igbo, (not the Igbo of the Eastern part of Nigeria) whose leader was Oreluere.

There is yet another version: It states that the Yoruba came from the Middle East (particularly around the Upper Nile) and moved westwards between 700-1100 A.D. Basil Davidson agrees with this version³. It is also stated in Davidson's work that when the English explorer, Captain Hugh Clapperton, asked Sultan Muhammad Bello (of the Sokoto Caliphate, 1779-1839) about the origin of the Yoruba race, the Sultan replied:

“The people are descended from Bani Kan’an, the kindred of Nimrud... Ya’rub ibn Qahtan drove them out of Iraq... they left a portion of their people. In every country they passed... the Sudanese who live on the hills are all their kindred, so also are the people of Yauri”.³

On their way to the present Yoruba land, they left their cousins, “the Kanuri”, in the present Borno and Yobe States and left their religious imprints amongst the Nupe in Niger State (and that is why the Nupe incidentally also the Igalla-speak Yoruba easily) and the Nupe have the same Ifa divination system as the Yoruba. The close connection between the Yoruba and the Nupe is further symbolised in the story of the King of Ọyọ, “Sango”, and his wife, “Ọya”. The Yoruba call the River Niger, along which most of the Nupe reside, “Odo Ọya”.

From the above evidence, it is not unreasonable to conclude that people were living at Ile-Ife before Oduduwa settled there. Put differently, the origins of Ile-Ife are much older than the period ascribed to Oduduwa. The author's late father, in conversation, would mention the names of such Kings⁴ as Kutukutu (Ọba Igbo) and Ọsangangan (Ọba Makin) who ruled at Ile-Ife before Oduduwa.

How the Yoruba spread out from Ile-Ife

During his lifetime, Oduduwa was known severally as Ọnile (the owner of the land), Ọlọfin Ajalaye and Adimula⁵. Oduduwa had a long life and relatively steady reign. "Ọọni" is a shortened form of Ọnile, which was used by Oduduwa himself. Ogun, his eldest son and great warrior, always led his army of conquests. In his old age, Oduduwa lost his sight and placed Ogun as Regent over all his kingdoms. Two of the former's sons, Ajibogun and Arẹmitan, were sent to fetch sea water (which was to be the cure for the ailment) but before their arrival, Ogun, the Regent, had died.

Following the loss of his eldest sons (Ọbameri and Esidale) Oduduwa decided to send his remaining sons to rule his vast Kingdom. Reportedly, the eldest surviving son, Ọbalufon Ogbogborinrin, remained at Ile-Ife as the Ọọni of Ife, and the other twenty-six surviving children were crowned and sent to various kingdoms.

The twenty-six crowned children were:

1. The Ọyọọrọ or Ọlọyọ of Ọyọ (now Alaafin of Ọyọland),
2. The Ogiso or Onibini of Benin (now Akenzua of Benin),
3. The Ajalake or Alake of Egbaland
4. The Ajibọgun or Owa of Ibokun (now Ijeşaland),
5. The Ajibosin Olowu of Owu,
6. The Ajagunla or Ọrangun of Ila,
7. The Soropasan or Alaketu of Ketu,
8. The Olugbọroḡan or Awujale of Ijebuland,
9. The Akarigbo of Ijebu-Remo,
10. The Osemawe of Ondo,
11. The Ajaponda, Deji of Akure,
12. The Elewi of Ado-Ekiti,
13. The Oninana of Kingdom of Ghana,
14. The Akinsale Elekole of Ikole,
15. The Onisabe of Sabe (Republic of Benin),
16. The Alaaye of Efon Alaaye,
17. The Onipopo of Popo,
18. The Aringbajo of Igbajo,
19. The Ogbe Ajero of Ijero,
20. The Ọwa Ọtan of Ọtan Aiyegbaju,
21. The Akarawale Alare of Ara
22. The Ọwafanran Owore of Ọtun
23. The Olojudo of Ido
24. The Oloşì of Oşì
25. The Ọbarada of Kingdom of Dahomey-now Republic of Benin
26. The Ọlowọ Arere of Ọwọ.

It is worth mentioning that these Kingdoms, recognised in aggregate by historians as the “Oduduwa Empire”, spread as far west as Togo, Dahomey (the present Benin Republic) and Ghana. Some of these Kingdoms were destroyed during internal wars and many were reduced

by cataclysmic circumstances, just as empires and kingdoms are known to have risen and fallen the world over.

Ọranmiyan, the youngest son of Oduduwa, was said to have lived between 1200 and 1300 A.D. and was not given any kingdom initially, but was left in the care of his eldest brother, Ọbalufon Ogbogborinrin (the Ọni of Ifẹ). He grew up to be a great warrior and later became the husband of the historic Ifẹ heroine, Mọrẹmi. It is this same Ọranmiyan that is said to be the founder of the present-day Benin Kingdom; an offshoot of the Oduduwa dynasty. It is also said that the existing Ogiso Rulership in Benin collapsed around the 12th century and it was around this time that the Benin people sent to Oduduwa for a king to rule over them. It should also be mentioned that the Ogiso were not kings, but rather, the oldest men in the community - some form of gerontocrats. Thus, Oduduwa sent Ọranmiyan to hold sway in the land and the latter became the first Ọba of Benin. He successfully fathered a son through a Bini woman, Eweka, (Ọwọmika in Ifẹ dialect) who later was installed on the throne. Remarkably, and up till this very day, the group of people around the Ọba of Benin still traditionally greet each other by asking: Ifẹ nko? (How is Ifẹ?). It is quite interesting to note that part of the court language in the palace of Benin, (which is known only to a few votaries) is of Yoruba origin; just as is the title “Ọba” also of Yoruba origin. Benin is a place that once was labelled the land of anger (Ilu Ibinu) by Ọranmiyan, the lineage ancestor who moved west to establish a powerful dynasty in Ọyọ and who equally assumed rulership as the Ọlọyọ of Ọyọ. Ọyọ subsequently became that great and powerful Kingdom that spread to the present-day Benin Republic.

On hearing that his elder brother and guardian, Ogbogborinrin, had joined his ancestors and that Ogbogborinrin’s son, Alayemọrẹ, had ascended the throne, Ọranmiyan decided to march on to Ile-Ifẹ to claim that which he felt was rightfully his. His contention was that a grandchild

could not ascend to the throne of his father while he (Ọranmiyan) was still alive. Alayemore fled Ile-Ifẹ and later founded the present day Ẹfọn Alaye in Ekiti State. Ọranmiyan's second son, Ajaka, was left to rule in Ọyọ as "Alaafin" instead of using the original title of Ọlọyọ.

Thus, Ọranmiyan was the only Ọọni of Ifẹ who had the honour of crowning two of his sons as both the Ọba of Benin and Alaafin of Ọyọ respectively. Upon the incident of his death, Ọranmiyan was buried at his grove, on the portion of land where the "Ọpa Ọranmiyan" is located at Aribidi, Ile-Ifẹ. He has been deified and is worshipped till date.

Yoruba World-View

Whichever historical account one chooses to take as the most probable of the origin of the Yoruba race, the latter believe in a worldview which accepts Ile-Ifẹ as the centre of the universe and the cradle of their race. It forms the girding framework of the agelong, elaborate and complex Yoruba political system, which includes such institutions as Kingship (Ọba), executive and legislature (Ogboni, Oṣugbo) and the guilds of artists and tradesmen.

The Yoruba have always had what can be called the **Ifẹ Model**; with the Ọba (King) at the centre of the city-state. He may also be called a divine ruler, (which he knows he is not really). The people who usually exercised this power were the chiefs, advisers and generals, whom the Ọba often had no power to appoint. It is also interesting to note that the Yoruba are probably the only ethnic group in the whole world who are mostly peasants yet live in towns and cities⁶.

NOTES

1. The origin of the Kingships institution in the various Yoruba areas is traced commonly to Ifẹ (Samuel Johnson, *A History of the Yoruba* (Lagos 1921).
2. Nigerian Legislative Debates Vol II 1940, page 56.
3. Basil Davidson, *The Africa Post*, pages 75-79. Penguin African Library Ap 20, (1966)
4. The names of the two Kings were mentioned to me by my late father (whose narrations must have been based on the early oral traditions of Ifẹ) just as were the account of Oduduwa's life.
5. The twenty-six Kingdoms of Oduduwa were mentioned by the then Qoni, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, in his letter to District Officer dated 9th October 1931 (NNA Qyo Prof. 19 File 133)
6. The Yoruba ethnic group consists of the linguistic group situated in the Former Western Region, present day Kwara, Kogi, Niger, Benue States. Namely: the Ekos, the Ifẹs, the Qyos, the Egbas, the Ijẹsas, the Aworis, the Ijẹbus, the Ilorins, the Rẹmọs, the Edos, the Itsekiris, the Yewas, the Ondos, the Ekitis, the Qwos, the Igbominas, the Ikalẹs, the Ilajẹs, the Yagbas, the Afẹmais, the Urhobos, the Eguns, the Ajaşes, the Ibadans, the Oşuns, the Ogbomoşos, the Nupes, the Qffas, the Igallas, the Ijumus, the Owes, the Bunus, the Oworos, and the Ogoni Magongos (arbitrarily separated from the mainstream by the British colonial policy which merged them with the North). Current statistics indicate that there are over 40 million Yoruba people in Nigeria as well as the greater millions of Brazilians, Cubans, Trinidadians and Tobagoans, Jamaicans, Beninoise, Togolese, Americans and Europeans who are Yoruba.
7. The Qba of Benin, Qba Erediauwa II, has in his recent autobiography, erroneously described the legendary Oduduwa as a community axe-man who later reappeared in Ile-Ifẹ after wandering in the bush for a long time. How can that be?! Let it be said loud and clear that the Oduduwa legend has no connection whatsoever with the claims of Qba Erediauwa II. Besides, it is too late for the Benin monarch to re-write the history of the Yoruba race

in the year 2004. After all, reputable historians and scholars, certainly more knowledgeable on the subject than the Benin monarch, give affirmation to the fact that Oduduwa has no connection with the Ogiso dynasty in Benin. Such scholars include Emeritus Prof. Ade Ajayi, Late Professor Saburi Biobaku (Sources of Yoruba History), the Late Afolabi Adio Moses Rashes of Ideas and Reflections), Chief (Dr.) M. A. Fabunmi (Ife, the Genesis of the Yoruba Race), Prof. Hakeem Haruna, Dr. Segun Oyeweso and, notably, the grandson of the last Ogiso of Benin Kingdom, Prince Michael Isede. There is no gainsaying therefore, that the Oduduwa dynasty predated that of the Ogiso, and that Yoruba culture, (which is acclaimed by historians as being the richest in the world) was an export to Benin from Ile-Ifẹ. As a matter of fact, a Benin historian, Jacob Egbarevba, who is an authority in Benin history, has confirmed our stand in his book: "A History of Benin", published in 1960, which – in a retrospective capacity roundly debunks the Qba of Benin's opinions about the origin of Oduduwa.

One does pertinently recount the writings of a contemporary historian on the long existence of Ile-Ife as a city. Prince Ladigbolu in his biography of Qba Oyebade Lipede, (the late Alake of Abẹokuta) quoted Herodotus, 'the Father of History' (484-424 B.C) thus: "According to history, there were five ancient cities in Africa between 3000 and 1000 BC one of which was Ile-Ifẹ".

The Oduduwa monarchy in Ile-Ifẹ expanded to the Benin and Qyo royalty through the reign of Qranmiyan, (one of Oduduwa's sons) in both places. Ifẹ symbolises the meeting point of the spiritual and physical history of the Yoruba people and the Oduduwa monarchical dynasty, which extended to Benin and other places in West Africa and the Diaspora. It was Oranimiyan's son, Owomika (shortened to Eweka in Edo) borne to him by an Edo woman, Erinwinde, who later ascended the throne of Benin when Qranmiyan moved to Qyo. The lineage has since then continued till today.

Therefore, it is not a coincidence in recent history when several "heads of past Qbas of Benin" were brought to Ile-Ifẹ to join their ancestors at their spiritual shrine said to still exist today at Ile-Ifẹ. Furthermore, credible sources reveal that it was not only the heads of the Benin monarchs that were buried in Ile Ifẹ but the interment was inclusive of other parts of their bodies at a location In Ifẹ called Qrun Qba Ado; an obvious reference, perhaps, to Qba Ado, the second Qba of Lagos. It is also on record that the present day Edo people are made up of immigrants from Ile-Ifẹ, and largely as well constitute,

the Ogiame settlers. The Qba of Benin has always been a descendant of Oduduwa and, was a prominent member of "Egbe Omo Oduduwa" (The Oduduwa Children's Fraternity) through the 1950s and 1960s. It is not out of place to mention the fact that Qba Akenzua II (the father of the present Benin monarch) received his royal tutelage under the late Qba Alake of Egbaland, Sir Ladapo Ademola II where he was thoroughly schooled in the delicate art of rulership.

It is also recalled that in the Western House of Qbas and Chiefs in the former Western Region, Sir Adeşoji Aderemi, the former Qoni of Ife, was the Chairman of the Council whilst Qba Akenzua II was a nominal member.

Even Qba Rilwan Akiolu 1 of Lagos asserted in an interview by "The Guardian Newspapers on May 20, 2003, that "Lagos is predominantly a Yoruba set-up and the first Qba of Lagos was a descendant of where all other Yoruba Qbas came from an obvious reference to Oduduwa and Ile-Ife . These stated facts go to show and prove that it is absolutely incontestable that the Qba of Benin is one of the children of the great Oduduwa. The Yoruba have built an enviable culture of excellence and accommodation over many centuries of the unbroken Oduduwa dynasty and have attracted the attention and admiration of blacks in the Diaspora and of people of all races in the world. Any attempt to poach on their preserved ancestry and culture will only prove counterproductive.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the Bini people wanting to restore their past glory. Nonetheless, the present penchant of some members of the Benin ruling class and elite for distorting history which tends to engineer aggravation, conflict and distrust amongst royalty and people of other communities. This will only resurrect the image of a place once labelled 'the land of anger', "Ilu Ibinu" (Benin, in Edo) by Qranmian. The lineage ancestor of that Qba of Benin who performed creditably well in establishing a strong Benin Kingdom which has remained in existence till date.

That is history recounted, and history cannot be wished away!

May The Good Lord Bless Oduduwa The Great!

CHAPTER TWO

Eko: Early History Traditions and Reputation

Eko: Early History, Traditions and Reputation

The First Settlers In Eko

***A**s stated in the last chapter, Ogiso or Onibini (now Akenzua) was one of the crowned children of Oduduwa from whom Lagos derived its crown. The spurious claim that Oba Orhogbua (who reigned in Benin at about 1550 A.D.) was the first to settle in Lagos¹ is simply erroneous, atavistic and invidious. It is also a mischievous attempt to fancifully reconstruct the history of Eko.*

The early traditions of Isale-Eko emphatically ascribe the settlement of Eko to a small group of Awori Yoruba immigrants, who had settled in the forest called Işeri² under the leadership of a hunter called Ogunfunminire³ (The god of iron has granted me success, or, mercy). Robert Smith⁴ agrees with this account. Historically, Ogunfunminire thus became the founder of the first of a series of settlements which later became collectively known as Eko (Lagos). Alongside members of his group, he settled at Işeri in the 16th century. There is no room here for the romanticism of his mystical exploits. Due to his pioneering role, a member of Ogunfunminire's group was decorated with the insignia of "Olofin Awogunjoye". Both Ogunfunminire and Olofin are reported to be members of the Royal House of Ife.

The most important of these settlements was the one at Ebute Meta (Three Shores). Due to incessant attacks & wars, which characterised the Yoruba history during that period, the settlers (under the leadership of Ọlọfin) moved to Iddo Island; which was considered more secure and strategically situated. Ọlọfin settled at Iddo-Orile with his thirty-two children, whence they spread further to Eko. The shrine of Ọlọfin, the legendary founder of Eko and a particularly gifted king is still in existence at Iddo. His descendants are also still living at Iddo Orile. Iddo is directly opposite Ọttọ town, whose traditional rulers incidentally were raised to the status of Ọba or Kingship in recent times. From these accounts, it is clear that the Ọlọfin regime had existed long before the incursion of the Binis.

When exactly the Ọlọfin period began is, of course, impossible to say (for now) and it will remain obscure until further research is done. Nevertheless, Isalẹ-Eko traditions inform that the Ọmọ-Eko were first subject to a ruler known as Ọlọfin; upon whose demise, the land at Eko with its surroundings were divided amongst the eldest ten of his sons. Namely: Aromirẹ, Olumẹgbọn, Onisiwo, Oluwa, Oniru, Onikoyi, Ọlọto, Ọjọra, Onitọlọ and Eleguṣi⁵. These ten Chiefs (being the ancestors of the Idẹjọ, "land owners") are also known as the **White Cap Chiefs** of Lagos. One of the many settlements founded during Ọlọfin's reign was an Island separated from Iddo, later called Eko, but which is now known as Lagos Island, Aromirẹ (lover of water) was the first to take possession of the land given to him by Ọlọfin. Thus, he was also the first person to set foot on Eko, which eventually became the nucleus of the Isalẹ-Eko settlement in Lagos, and which as well harbours the official palace of the Ọba of Lagos.

Aromirẹ Onipilẹ (founder) was also said to have regularly turned into "Ẹyẹ Ake" (the swallow bird) and would swim from Iddo to Ebute-Ero in Lagos to hunt, and after hunting for the day, would relax at Ebute-Ero before swimming back to Iddo.

Ọlọfin, his children and party who were distinctively Eko Aworis⁶ - were later joined on the island by a batch of Bini warriors, other Yoruba elements and pioneer immigrant settlers including liberated slaves.

Eko

Eko is the original name of Lagos. Aromire is the historical figure to whom tradition has accorded the singular honour of being the first fisherman to settle on the farmland, Oko, from which the new Island derived its Yoruba name, Eko.

Indeed, the change from “Oko” to “Eko” marked one distinct period of Lagos history; the period of **Awori Yoruba rule**. The similarity between the two words must have facilitated this transition in the minds of Eko indigenes. Eko was actually named Lagos by Portuguese traders who saw a similarity between the Nigerian coastal town and another town in Portugal, called Lagos de Kuramo (Lagos by the seashore).

Whilst the “real Ọmọ-Eko” (the original inhabitants of Eko) settled at Isalẹ-Eko, Idunmagbo and Ebute-Ero, other groups inhabited different areas of the island: -

- i) The present-day Marina, known then as Ẹhin-Igbẹti (which means “behind the thick bush”) was occupied by one group
- ii) Another group was domiciled at Arọlọya, Faji, Portuguese town (east of Faji) from the Central Mosque right up to Massey Square.
- iii) The returnees from Brazil and Portugal went to Bamgbose Street, Igboşere, and Campos Square (known as Brazilian Quarters).
- iv) The returnees from Ẹpe in 1862, settled at Ẹpeṭẹdo which consisted of twenty-one compounds.

- v) The "Aganyin" (a catchword for strangers, referring specifically to people from neighbouring West African countries like Ghana, Togo and Benin Republic) settled at Okun and Iru (Victoria Island). They were fishermen.
- vi) The "Kurumọ" - corruption of "crew man" - consisted of ship crew (mainly from Liberia) and the "Saro" (mainly freed captives and their descendants who had been set ashore in Sierra Leone) settled at Apọngbọn, Olowogbowo and Breadfruit areas of Lagos.
- vii) Another group from the present-day Niger State, "the Nupe" settled at Lafiaji; a swamp area they used in planting rice. In the morning, they would greet each other thus: "Alafia kọ lẹ ji?" Meaning: "have you woken up in health and peace?" And which later became corrupted to "Lafiaji, the present name of the place.
- viii) The Ajẹreke (West Indians) settled at what was then known as the West Indian quarters-Ebute-Mẹta.
- ix) The Hausa/Fulani and other immigrants from the North settled at Ọbalende (corruption of "Ibi Ọba le'nde") - meaning, where the king drove me to.
- x) Others settled at Igbo Işere (playing groves) now known as Igboşere.

Eko also harbours amongst her indigenes, a special category, "the returnees", (those from Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo, and Brazil) whose forefathers contributed towards making Lagos what she is today. Most of them worked in the Nigerian Railways and others held sway in the Civil Service. Other prominent firms where they worked include: U.A.C., G.B. Ollivant, P.Z., Tangalakis (a famous Greek firm), W.H. Biney and Co. and some stevedoring outfits. By and large, they occupied the upper-middle class within the Lagos social strata of the time.

In Eko, one would notice district names like Idunmagbo, Idunmọta, Iduntafa, Idunşagbe, and Idunmọyinbo. The “Idun” prefix comes from the Benin language, (denoting “a ward”) and has since been assimilated into Lagosian language. This is purely historical and anthropological. This also can be seen in Ikorodu, Ode Remo also has Itunkona, Iperu, Ilişan, and Ikẹnẹ. “Itun” also means and connotes “ward”. Thus, it is not uncommon to hear of names such as Itunwaye, Itunmọja, and Itunwọlo etc. Such things are not strange, even in the Hausa terminology. Here we encounter; Ungwar Sarki, Ungwar Rimi etc. where “Ungwar” denotes “wards”. Kofar Alikali, Kofar Usman Katsina is also commonplace with Kofar being used to connote city “gates”.

There is no gainsaying the fact that “Qmọ-Eko” are accommodating. This probably explains why Lagos has become a unique melting pot of diverse cultures and a true metropolis in modern Africa.

Isale-Eko Indigenes

Isale-Eko indigenes constitute, on merit, a distinguished sub-group of the Yoruba. They were once part and parcel of the once powerful empire of Oduduwa. They were led into a war of liberation by Qlofin and it was around the famous Qlofin (later Aşipa and Ado) that the founding of Eko revolved. It is known from oral and written history that Qmọ-Eko’s ancestors established a well-grounded government and administration, (rooted in their own culture of Awori traditions) before the unwholesome intrusion of the British colonialists. The author is of the firm belief that if there had been no European intervention, the Qmọ-Eko (and the Yoruba generally) would by now have evolved a unique system in which their city-states would have become modern and powerful nations, to the envy of other peoples on the continent and other parts of the world. Though Eko is a cosmopolitan city, the traditions of the original inhabitants have been preserved, continue to thrive, and now form the greater part of the rich culture of Lagos State.

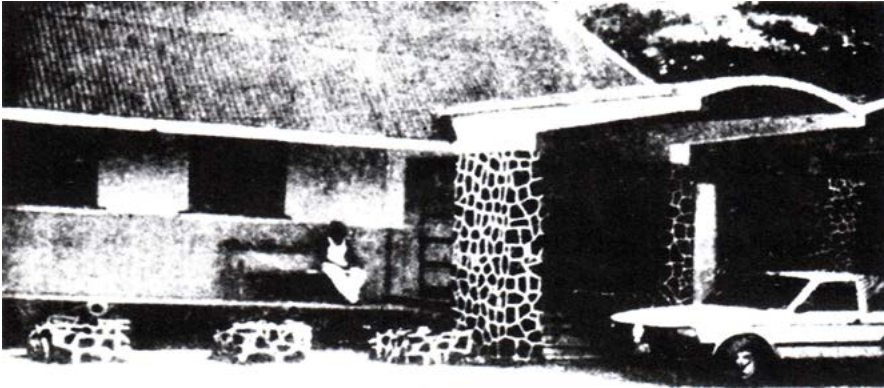
The Isalẹ-Eko dialect of the Yoruba language is Eko Awori and it is a delight to the good ear. It is musical and agreeable. The Isalẹ-Eko indigenes have produced musical geniuses like Abibu Oluwa and have manifested quite different musical traditions of note; particularly the Gbedu drummers and Igbe singers.

The Igbe Qba Eko dance is ancient and exclusive to the Qba of Lagos, her princes and princesses. The accompanying music is from royal drums which resound with solemn beats. It is a ceremonial dance to be performed at the instance of the Qba and other personages at funerals, chieftaincy installations and other royal occasions. Igbe also embodies the traditional royal song of praise. It is indeed a genre that is peculiar and unique to Lagos. Again, the style of singing is distinctively Awori and has become the traditional music of the aged 'Oloris' (Queens) of the royal household and chieftaincy families of Lagos. The repertoire of Igbe songs consists essentially of the history of the royal lineage since the founding of the ancient Kingdom of Eko. Igbe songs are never altered. They have been faithfully handed down from generation to generation over the ages. They have become classics, and often throw some light into a hazy past. They constitute a record of Igbe oral history that informs well-established traditions, norms and culture.

Ẹfẹ, classic oral poetry of traditional singers, is another authentic feature in the catalogue of peculiar Isalẹ-Eko traditions that are found nowhere else.

It is an incontrovertible that the first professionals in Nigeria (ministers of religion, lawyers, doctors, accountants, journalists, etc.) were Eko indigenes: Yoruba residents in Lagos, who provided leadership to the whole of the country in every aspect of human life.

Iga Idunganran – “The Palace Built On The Pepper Farm” *(Official Residence Of The Oba of Lagos)*



*IGA IDUNGANRAN A partial front view
of the official residence of the Oba of Lagos State.*

The Iga originated as a gift of land to the second monarch of Lagos, Oba Ado, by Chief Aromire (a child of Olofin). The period usually assigned to the gift is the middle of the 17th century. More accurately stated, Iga Idunganran has been established since about 1670.

Aromire had his farm at Isale-Eko (Isale meaning “under”, “at the base of”, “heart” of, or in modern usage, “downtown”) - the main Lagos ghetto. It was situated on the site called Idunganran (Eko Awori dialect). The site of the palace was Aromire’s pepper farm. It was derived thus: “Iganran” means “pepper” while “Idun” means “farm”. In other words, Iga Idunganran literally means: “The Palace on the Pepper farm. While it can be said that Oba Gabaro was the first to erect any building on the land, it is a fact of history that it was Oba Ologun Kutere who brought it the desired national recognition. Also from the time of Gabaro to the present, Iga Idunganran has been the traditional home of the Obas of

Lagos. Every person who occupied the Iga did so as the Ọba of Lagos. The occupation of the Iga Idunganran is synonymous with Ọbaship status. Ọba Oyekan II tried to change the course of history in 1964 in a failed quest to obtain a court judgement which would uphold the claim that the Palace belonged to the House of Dosunmu.

Eko: Cradle of Political Activities

The first indigenous political groups were the Gbegi and Gbebọ, founded respectively, in opposition to and in support of the water rate levy during the political rift between Ọba Eşugbayi Eleko and the colonial government in 1925⁷. The Gbegi, (which was anti-“colonial government”) supported the Ọba against the levy; while the Gbebọ (the pro- “colonial-government” faction) was led by Ọbanikoro Akeju. The activities of the two opposing groups were limited to Lagos but that was the genesis of Isale-Eko’s involvement in politics.



Second Row (from bottom) sixth from the left: Abibu Oki (chairman)

Third Row (from bottom) fourth from the left: Chief Sanni Kotun (Executive Member / The Author's Father)

Third Row (from bottom) sixth from the left: Herbert Macaulay (Executive Secretary)

The Ilu Committee, which emerged in 1914 and later metamorphosed into the Nigerian National Democratic Party under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay and his able lieutenants, Baba (Chief) Sanni Kọtun, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. Ibiyinka Ọlọrunnimbẹ (who rose to become the first Mayor of Lagos), Pa Joachim, Abibu Oki, Braimọh Igbo, to mention a few, was the first political party in Lagos, and indeed, Nigeria. It became a thorn in the flesh of the British colonial administration.

House No. 36, Idumagbo Avenue, Lagos, the residence of Baba (Chief) Sanni Kọtun, (the author's father) was the "political Mecca" for all sorts of politicians of different shades. They spent a lifetime fighting the old order and organised students and workers nationwide to found the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroun, (NCNC, as it was then known) which was dedicated to the New Africa. It must be conceded that people like Dr. J. K. Randle, Sir Kitoyi Ajasa, Dr. Henry Carr and Sir Adeyẹmọ Alakija were leaders in their own right. But they were regarded as pro-British and as such, Ọmọ-Eko and other non-compromising activists kept a safe distance from them.

The fact must not be overlooked that the Hausa (Ọmọ-Eko's brothers and sisters from the North of Nigeria) were not in this Lagos group of leaders because, on the accounts of Messrs. Habib Raji Abdallah and Mallam Sa'adu Zungur, there was a binding agreement between Lord Lugard and the Sokoto Caliphate (a conspiracy theory, the profundity of which merits its verification). This agreement imposed a complete isolation of the Hausa from the politics of the South, in order to curtail the dissemination of ideas which could liberate them from the Fulani feudal oligarchy and create administrative problems for Lugard - as he was then experiencing in the South. Messrs. Habib Raji Abdallah (the fact of his exact place of origin-one of the present Kogi or Niger States - is currently unavailable to the author) and Mallam Saa'du

Zunge (from the present Bauchi State) both Northern Nationalists who emerged from the North, joined the Lagos group of youth leaders and played active and prominent roles during a planned youth rally against British imperialism in 1947. The author, who was a co-agitator and was billed to speak on the topic "My Soul Rebels". The British did not allow the rally to be held. Top leaders of the group, exclusive of the author, were arrested, charged to court and tried on counts of "sedition" and "unlawful assembly". Nonetheless, the leaders of the rally considered their actions a sacred national duty. The author escaped prosecution because he was underage at the time. Credit must be given to the British here for adhering strictly to their own laws. Some of those tried were found guilty and imprisoned for a year. Others were discharged and acquitted.

However, it is on record that the late Zanna Bukar Dipcharima, who hails from the present Borno State, accompanied members of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroun to the Constitutional Conference in London in 1946.

It is significant to note that at such an early age of seventeen, the author and other youths were already activists, were very vocal, and had written quite a few articles on national issues. In the author's case, he was following the footsteps of his father, Baba (Chief) Sanni Kɔtun, the second Vice-President of the Nigerian National Democratic Party, who, surprisingly, disapproved of his son's political activities. He cautioned him to keep away from the murky waters of politics, adding that, politicians think in logic-tight-compartments: saying one thing and doing another.

EKO: *The Economic Hub and Political Nerve-Centre.*

Eko, like many ports around the world, has a magic that attracts people from diverse backgrounds and nations. Its position as a principal trading post and a veritable route into Yorubaland, and, consequently, into the Nigerian hinterland, partly propelled its occupation by the British in 1861. It was Ọba Dosunmu who ceded the Island of Lagos to the British government on the 6th of August, 1861. From that time, Eko became the principal port in Nigeria and later became the seat of the British colonial government. People would flock into Lagos from all parts of Nigeria to work in the Civil Service, or, to have a slice of its bustling economy. This activity was so rampant that sooner rather than later, there was a common aphorism that “Eko gba ole o gba ọlẹ” (Lagos accommodates shady characters and idlers). All were fully welcomed by the Ọmọ-Eko who are known to have a bounteous spirit.

Eko enjoyed the privilege of being the first local government to be set up in the country as far back as 1918.

It is recalled that when, in the late nineteen-forties, a National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) stalwart from the East, the late. Charles “Daddy” Onyeama (as he was then known), abused the hospitality of Lagosians and declared that “Lagos is a no man’s land”, there was a barrage of criticism from Lagosians. They were forced out of their lethargic slumber to recognise that a plot was being hatched to take away from them the only enclave to which they were entitled by birth in the face of the colonial onslaught. The battle was fierce and was fought on all fronts.

The Action Group, led by Chief Ọbafemi Awolọwọ, came to the rescue and Lagos was made part of the then Western Region in order to prove and establish without a doubt that Lagos was a Yoruba city belonging to Lagosians, and was not a wilderness as was being bandied. Lagosians,

having been aroused from their slumber, were quick to take over the struggle. In the 1960 local government election in Lagos, the Action Group defeated NCNC overwhelmingly and the political climate of Lagos changed for the good, (from the Ọmọ-Eko's viewpoint). It changed from a "no man's land" to a "Lagos for Lagosians". Thus, when it is said: "Gedegbe l'Eko wa", this literally means, Lagos is an independent settlement with a unique identity of its own.

When the British were leaving Lagos in 1960, Lagos retained its status as capital of the Nigerian Federation. That however changed on December 12, 1991, when General Ibrahim Babangida moved the seat of government to Abuja. While the central government relocated elsewhere, commerce and industry remained rooted in Lagos. Ikeja, (the prime industrial district and part of the old Western Region of Nigeria) became the capital of Lagos State.

The indigenes of Eko are a proud set of people. Socially, they are gregarious, accommodating and sociable. Indeed, they love life. They know that Eko belongs to them. Isalẹ-Eko is the headquarters of the original inhabitants of Lagos Island - the abode of the Ọmọ-Isalẹ-Eko and in spite of the hustle and bustle of a dizzying modernisation taking place all around it, Isalẹ-Eko refuses to be swallowed. It still retains its identity. It is the heart of Lagos; just as Lagos itself is the commercial nerve-centre of Nigeria, notwithstanding the fact that Abuja is the capital city.

The indigenes of Isalẹ-Eko sing gleefully of their common origin. The song that embodies this rapture of joy goes thus: -

Isalẹ-Eko o, e;	<i>Isalẹ-Eko o, e;</i>
Isalẹ-Eko o, e;	<i>Isalẹ-Eko o, e;</i>
Isalẹ-Eko a mo'ra wa	<i>Those of us who come from Isalẹ-Eko</i>
Awọn Atọhun-rin-wa o	<i>know ourselves; those who come</i>
Wọn mọ'ra wọn.	<i>From yonder know themselves.</i>

This became a song of identity. Lagos cannot be imitated!

NOTES

1. I. Egbarevba, A History of Benin (Ibadan 1960)
2. Işeri now is a growing urban area with Işeri Oke (whose inhabitants are fishermen) and Işeri Isale divided by a narrow strip of the Ogun River. The latter is located in Lagos, while the former (upstream) is situated in Ogun State. The Işeri Isale environs would have made Oguntunminire a farmer; so he belonged to it.
3. For a full account on the settlement of Oguntunminire at Işeri, see Losi, Story of Lagos (1921)
4. Robert Smith, Kingdoms of the Yoruba (London: Methuen, (1969).
5. Eko tradition, as narrated by the author's father, Baba Sanni Koton. They are also based on narrations from the best traditional authorities. The names of the political groups "Gbegi" and "Gbebọ" were also mentioned to the author by his father, who was himself a member of the "Gbegi" group. His immediate junior brother, the author's uncle, was a member of the "Gbebọ" group! This is true democracy at work!
6. The Awori are also found in Ikeja, Ojo, Agege, Alimosho, Badagry, Oshodi, Isolo, Mushin, and Shomolu Local Government areas of Lagos State. Some of them are in Surulere, Mainland, Lagos Island and Eti-Osa Council areas. The Awori people are also in Ota, Ado-Odo, Igbessa, Ogijo and Omu in the present Ogun State.

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